

the forum

Virginia's Labor Market & Occupational Information Newsletter

Volume 8, Number 3 Winter 2008

Five Shocking Paychecks

Are you making what you're worth? Even in a tight economy, some workers are taking home more money than their job titles might reveal. Here's a look at five careers that come with surprising salaries—and what you need to do to land one.

Court Reporters

Court reporters may not out-earn the judge and attorneys, but they take home a handsome paycheck without a college degree. Compared with the seven years' worth of college tuition their courtroom peers pay, court reporters earn their \$50,000 salary with a two-year certificate in court reporting. If you can work your way up to 225 words per minute using special transcription applications, then you can join the ranks of court reporters.

The Lowdown: Court reporters record oral proceedings in court, in private depositions, and in meetings using computer-aided transcription technology. Given the importance of written transcripts in the legal field, reporters are respected as the "guardians of the record." Demand is strong for certified reporters; the Department of Labor predicts a 25 percent growth in jobs through 2016. Court reporters typically carry a bachelor's degree in communications, public relations, media, or a related field. To sharpen their knowledge on legal proceedings, they can also take classes in criminal justice and law. **Average Salary: \$48,380** (*BLS 2007); **\$62,000** (**NCRA)




Fashion Designers

You don't have to be Tom Ford to make a good living as a fashion designer. Most successful designers fly under the radar creating mass-market designs for department stores and retail chains. They may not make headlines during New York Fashion Week, but they take home solid paychecks in the \$60,000-\$80,000 range.

The Lowdown: Fashion designers take their eye for cut and color and their knowledge of fashion trends to the drawing board to produce lines of clothing and accessories for the consumer market. Most designers develop these skills with a two-year associate's degree in fashion design from an art school or college degree program. In addition, they learn to use powerful computer-aided design (CAD) applications.

Average Salary: \$71,170 (*BLS, 2007)

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School Principals

Teachers are notoriously underpaid—but their administrative colleagues have a salary advantage. High school principals in many districts take home six-figure paychecks. These compensation levels reflect the leadership responsibility and educational investment principals take on. High-level education administrators are also enjoying increasing demand as school enrollments grow and older administrators retire.

The Lowdown: A graduate degree and plenty of school experience will help an ambitious teacher or administrator make it to the principal's office. A two-year master's of education (M.Ed.) or a Ph.D. in education administration is a common qualification for the position. In addition, principals come to the job with demonstrated leadership and communication skills.

Average Salary: \$82,120 (*BLS, 2007)

Technical Writer

Writing is a labor of love for many, but for writers in technical fields it's also the source of a healthy paycheck. Technical writers translate technical information for a mass audience, making them a crucial link between consumers and techie product and service providers. Their technical expertise earns them an extra \$10,000 a year over the average writer's salary, according to some estimates.

The Lowdown: Writers typically hold a college bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, or English. Technical writers may increase their employability with courses or a degree in a technical field or a certificate in technical writing. **Average Salary: \$62,780** (*BLS, 2007)



Aircraft Mechanic

A vocational school training program can land you a solid living as an aircraft mechanic. The \$40,000 to \$80,000 earnings range reflects the specialized training required to perform avionics repair and maintenance. Aircraft mechanics inspect landing gear, instruments, cabin pressurizing systems, aviation electronics, and more.

The Lowdown: The FAA certifies 170 trade schools to train aircraft mechanics in the craft. Most programs take 19 to 24 months to complete, although some schools offer 2- and 4-year degrees in avionics or aviation technology.

Average Salary: \$49,670 (*BLS, 2007)

Even in the midst of a struggling economy, strong salaries are cropping up in the most unexpected places. Choose the right blue-collar job, and you could be earning an upwardly mobile income. Choose the right education or creative profession, and you could turn a "labor of love" into labor for good money. Choose the right industry, and you could be earning much more for the same work. Surprising salaries aren't hard to come by: simply find a high-demand niche, get the education to fulfill the job requirements, and start earning what you're worth.

*Bureau of Labor Statistics **National Court Reporters Association

Source: Clare Kaufman, Keller Graduate School of Management

Top Ranked Colleges for 2009



Higher education can be very important in qualifying for that perfect job or career. However, with all the choices of colleges and universities, it can get a bit overwhelming. It helps to know what field you would like to pursue and then search for a college that specializes in that field. The internet is a great source to turn to when researching colleges in your chosen field of study.

Every year the *U.S. News & World Report* does a ranking of more than 1,400 colleges. *U.S. News* ranks colleges by best overall, discipline (i.e., Engineering programs), and by other categories such as best value or up-and-coming colleges.

Here are some of *U.S. News & World Report's* top 5 rankings for:

Best Colleges: Top Public Schools: National Universities

University of California—Berkeley	Berkeley, CA
University of Virginia	Charlottesville, VA
University of California—Los Angeles	Los Angeles, CA
University of Michigan—Ann Arbor	Ann Arbor, MI
University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill	Chapel Hill, NC

Best Colleges Specialty Rankings: Best Undergraduate Engineering Programs

Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Cambridge, MA
Stanford University	Stanford, CA
University of California—Berkeley	Berkeley, CA
California Institute of Technology	Pasadena, CA
Georgia Institute of Technology	Atlanta, GA

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Best Colleges Specialty Ranking: Best Undergraduate Business Programs

University of Pennsylvania	Philadelphia, PA
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Cambridge, MA
University of California—Berkeley	Berkeley, CA
University of Michigan—Ann Arbor	Ann Arbor, MI
New York University	New York, NY

Historically Black Colleges and Universities Ranking

Spelman College	Atlanta, GA
Howard University	Washington, D.C.
Morehouse College	Atlanta, GA
Hampton University	Hampton, VA
Fisk University	Nashville, TN

The Forum has only listed the first 5 rankings for these categories. For the full ranking to these and other listings, please go to: <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/college/index.html>.

Source: www.usnews.com

Resources to Help Pay for Training!

The cost of education and training continues to increase. The good news is that there are a lot of financial assistance programs. These programs are available for college students and adult learners. There are a host of resources for you to investigate:

- The U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid (FSA) programs are the largest source of student aid in America. They provide about 70% of all student financial aid. Visit Student Aid on the Web for more information.
- The American Council on Education's College Is Possible page has a glossary of financial aid terms, information on major programs, and links to additional resources.
- GovBenefits is a free, easy-to-use website. It helps you to find ways to pay for your education and training. First, you answer a series of questions about yourself. Then GovBenefits gives you a list of government benefits for which you may be eligible. Finally, GovBenefits gives you information about how to apply.
- CareerOneStop's Financial Aid Center has information on financial assistance for college students. It also has resources for workers who need training.
- America's Career Resource Network (ACRN) consists of state and federal organizations that provide information, resources and training on career and education exploration. A resource you might find useful is their Financial Aid Resources for Post-High School Education (PDF, 2.8 MB).

Source: www.careervoyages.gov

How to Get Scholarships in a Bad Economy



Six tips for getting more grants as part of your college financial aid package

Financial aid experts say the current economic troubles will very likely make the competition for scholarships more fierce than ever. They expect about half of all college students to receive at least a little free money to fund their education. To maximize your chances of getting aid in these tough times, experts recommend that students:

1) Be the early bird. Start applying for scholarships and lining up low-priced college options right now. “You want to make sure you are the first one in line,” says Cheryl Maplethorpe, director of financial aid for the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. Many grants are awarded on a first-come-first-served basis, she notes. And many low-cost colleges are cutting off applications especially early this season. College students who haven’t already filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid this year should do it as soon as possible. (High school seniors have to wait until January to apply for next fall.) You can search for nongovernmental scholarships by asking your high school counselor, your college’s financial aid office, and your college’s department for scholarship possibilities and advice. Many are also listed on websites like this one, scholarsite.com, or the College Board.

While there aren’t many private scholarships still awarding money for this academic year, students can—and should—start applying now for private scholarships for next year, because some of the biggest and best private scholarships, such as those offered by the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation, have October deadlines. And the most popular cheap four-year schools in California, including San Diego State University and Sonoma State University, will stop taking next year’s admissions applications for many types of students November 30.

2) Ask the boss. Check with the student’s and parents’ employers to see if they offer any kind of education or scholarship benefit.

3) Try low-cost colleges. Prepare applications (including transfer applications for students already in college) to some low-cost, in-state community colleges and public universities to provide a “financial safety school” option, says Eileen O’Leary, assistant vice president of student financial services at Stonehill College in Easton, Mass. That way, even if you don’t get any free money, your bills still will be much lower.

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4) Become a catch. Prepare applications to at least two (or even more, to increase your chances of setting off a scholarship bidding war) public and private schools for which you'd be a catch because of higher-than-average grades or some special skill or talent. Students whose grades or test scores are higher than the school's average have a good chance of receiving merit grants. "Put as much detail as possible into your college application," says Sandra Bartholomew, dean of enrollment management at Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vt. "Colleges have money to award for lots of nonacademic credentials" like leadership, community service, environmentalism, visual and performing arts, etc., she adds.

5) Fill out forms in January. As soon as possible in January, fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to qualify for aid next fall. While it is easier to complete the form if the student and parent have also filed their taxes, it is better to fill out the FAFSA with estimates (which can later be corrected) early than to wait past February 1. Students hoping to attend one of the approximately 300 schools that also require the College Board's more exhaustive CSS/Financial Aid Profile application should also complete that before mid-February.

6) Appeal. Draft an appeal letter if the student has any financial difficulties not covered by the FAFSA, such as a parent's job loss or mortgage problems. The student should send letters explaining the problem (with documentation, if possible) to any target schools and private scholarship programs, financial aid officers say. The letter to schools should request a "professional judgment review."

Source: Kim Clark, www.usnews.com



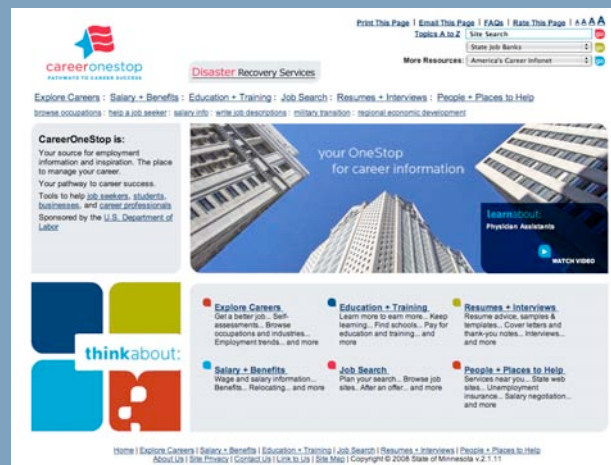
People Are Asking . . .

What is CareerOneStop?

CareerOneStop is your source for employment information and inspiration. The place to manage your career—your pathway to career success. There are tools to help job seekers, students, businesses, and career professionals. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.

You are able to explore careers, obtain information on education and training, job search, résumé and cover letter advice, salary and benefits, how to get services from people and places near you, and many other resources.

Source: www.careeronestop.org



What Is Informational Interviewing (and Should You Really Do It)?

Although it has an imposing name, informational interviewing is nothing more than talking to people to gather more information about a particular job. It is a critical part of your research and job-search process, and it's the best way to find out if a job is actually of interest to you.

Talking to people will give you information that you cannot learn from reading. You might ask people about what they do, their career path, their industry, or their company. Most people want to be helpful, and many people enjoy speaking to others about what they know.

If you are interested in learning more about a certain career path or what it is like to work for a particular company, you need to find people who know something about those things. Ask everyone you know for introductions to people who could give you the kind of information you are looking for. Ask every person you speak with to help you find additional people to speak with. The process of talking to as many people as possible can help you narrow down what you want to do.

People often ask me how to contact someone for an informational interview. For most people, sending them an e-mail, if you have their address, is fine. If not, a telephone message will work just as well. If you got their name and contact information from someone else, say, "So-and-so suggested I call you. I am looking for information about [job or company], and I was wondering if we could find some time to have a conversation."

If someone doesn't respond to your request, don't take it personally. Just contact the next person. Through the process, you will learn quite a bit that will help you decide what you want to do, and you will begin to build your own career network.

Source: Ricki Frankel, www.hundredsofheads.com



The Forum spring/summer issue will be available April 2009.

If you would like to receive e-mail notification of the availability of the latest issue, contact linda.simmons@vec.virginia.gov

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- Entrepreneurship
- Job Interview Tips

the forum is an online newsletter of the Virginia Employment Commission. It is produced and distributed by the Virginia Employment Commission in Richmond.

The Virginia Employment Commission is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

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Product Order Form

These products are available at no charge, except where noted.

Item	Description	Quantity
Bookmarks	The high school graduate vs. the high school dropout	
Job Interview Pocket Résumé	Small tri-fold reference résumé that fits in a wallet or pocket	
Virginia's Mid-Atlantic Guide to Information on Careers (MAGIC)	Contains information on education, job training, job-seeking, and careers—Minimal fee charged for orders outside of Virginia—also available on the VEC website*	
Virginia Business Resource Directory	How to start your own business—also available on the VEC website*	Hard copy
		CD-ROM
Virginia Job Outlook	Brochure with top occupations, growth rate, and annual average salaries by educational attainment—also available on the VEC website*	
Display Posters	Qualities Needed for Success in the Workplace—24"x18"	
	Visualize - Starting Your Own Business—24"x18"	
	Interview Tips—18"x 24"	
One-Page Information Sheets—camera-ready versions to print multiple copies	Eight Keys to Employability	
	Tomorrows Jobs	
	Sample Application Form	
	Ten Most-Wanted Skills	
	Education Pays...	
Available only on the VEC website*		
Virginia Labor Market Information Directory	Listing and description of VEC publications, products, special services, and data delivery systems—reference material only	
Industry and Occupational Employment Projections: 2006-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia • Workforce Investment Areas (WIAs) • United States 	
Occupational Wage Data Report: 2007	Reference material only for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United States • Statewide, Virginia • Workforce Investment Areas (WIAs) • Virginia Metropolitan Wage Data (MSAs) • Occupational Employment Statistical Regions Planning Districts • Planning District Commissions (PDCs) 	

*VaEmploy.Com

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Virginia Employment Commission

LMDA, Room 213
P.O. Box 1358
Richmond, VA 23218-1358
Telephone (804) 786-8223
Fax (804) 371-0412

For large orders, please make sure that the address you list is for a physical location (not a P.O. box) and that you include the name of a contact person.

Please feel free to make copies of this order form.

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Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Telephone ()		
E-mail Address:		
Is this order for a scheduled event?	Yes	
	If yes, date needed by: (Please allow 5-7 business days for delivery)	
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